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Vol. I. No. 6

July, 1947

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE sudden announcement that the de Basil Original Ballet Russe and not the American Ballet Theatre was to be our summer visiting company at Covent Garden came as a great surprise to everyone, particularly as news from New York indicated that after its season there the company had more or less split up. However, reorganized for London, it opens on July 22nd, with pre-war favourites Tatiana Riabouchinska and David Lichine back in the fold, and de Basil's latest "baby ballerina", fifteen-year-old April Olrich. The season is for four and a half weeks with a probable three or four weeks extension. Murray N. Friedman's article on page 23 includes an account of the New York spring season, though the guest artists he mentions will not be appearing in London.

Robert Helpmann's courageous and uncompromising "No", when asked during a recent radio programme whether he liked playing the princes of classical ballet, must have caused quite a sensation amongst that section of the audience who like to believe that their idols are necessarily enjoying what they themselves adore watching. It is plainly a far greater tribute to Helpmann's artistry that he should for so long have simulated so convincing an interest in what he called "cardboard princes" than that he should really have felt that interest. It might also be borne in mind that very few dancers are in a position to pick and choose what they will or will not dance, and when we express our annoyance at a poor performance in an extremely unsuitable role we might perhaps spare a little pity for the dancer, who may be even more miserably aware of his or her shortcomings than we are. A reasonable degree of versatility must be expected of any dancer, but the casting policy of ballet companies (and particularly at Covent Garden) is sometimes beyond comprehension.

Georges Balanchine is with the Paris Opera Ballet as choreographer and *maître de ballet*. On page 19 Hans Wild writes about his first work for the company. It will be interesting to see whether he, above all other choreographers possessing a peculiarly individual genius, will be able to break down some of the rigid conventions with which the Opera is hedged around.

Alexandre Kalioujny, who made a great stir in London last year with the Nouveau Ballet de Monte Carlo, has been signed at the Opera as *étoile*, an unprecedented honour for someone who has not graduated from the school into the company and gone through all the gradings from second quadrille upwards. Although England saw him only as a character dancer, he is said to have a remarkably fine classical technique.

The new *danseur étoile* by examination, Michel Renault, has the makings of an important dancer. He has a strong and sparkling technique, takes an obvious delight in what he is doing, and has a considerable boyish charm. In physique he is rather like Alexis Rassiné but has a good deal more vitality. Unfortunately the Paris Opera is not the best environment in the world for artists of individuality. It is a safe harbour for the mediocre once they have squeezed their way into the *corps de ballet*, and although in England and America too much emphasis is placed on youth (if dancers were worked less hard they would not be tired out before they are thirty), it is still somewhat of a shock to note the prevailing elderliness amongst the rank and file.

Tamara Toumanova is dancing at the Paris Opera as guest artist, and pre-war balletomanes will be anxious to know what their beloved baby ballerina is like nowadays. I saw her in *Giselle* at one of the Wednesday night performances which are still the rule (the season of ballet begins in July). She is more beautiful than ever and very slim. Also she dances marvellously, with a balance that enables her to hold positions apparently endlessly and effortlessly. I saw her shoes afterwards and they had ordinary blocks, not the new American atrocities with the extra-wide base. Two years' study with Nijinska has given her the elevation of a man, with all her woman's lightness and grace. In the second act there is some music which I have never heard included in any other version, to which she does some astounding supported *arabesques* on point, being lifted into the air and put down again in the same position, moving across the stage. On the other hand, her years in America have superimposed a sophistication which ill accords with *Giselle's* peasant simplicity, and this prevented me from being moved except by admiration for her dancing.

In all Paris theatres the bad old custom survives of taking curtains at the end of every act. Even so, I was not prepared for the sight of Albrecht (M. Roger Ritz) lugging (there is no other word) the dead *Giselle* to her feet in order to acknowledge the applause. Poor Toumanova looked as dazed as I felt.

As a production the Paris Opera *Giselle* does not begin to exist. It becomes more and more clear that Les Ballets des Champs-Élysées are as much an essential breaking away from the tyranny of French Ballet as was the Diaghilev Ballet from the chains of the Maryinsky Theatre.

P. W. M.



Photograph by Duncan Melvin

NANA GOLLNER AND PAUL PETROFF, WITH ERNEST HEWITT AS BENNO

THE END OF THE CODA, "SWAN LAKE", ACT 2, BY INTERNATIONAL BALLET

Photograph by Edward Mandinian

MONA INGLESBY AND JACK SPURGEON, AGAIN WITH ERNEST HEWITT



INTERNATIONAL BALLET

THE recent six weeks' London season at the Adelphi Theatre was dogged by persistent bad luck due to the recurrent illness of Nana Gollner, who was only able to appear on a very few occasions. In the circumstances *La Bayadere*, Act 4, had to be cancelled altogether and interest centred chiefly around the full-length *Swan Lake*. Insofar as a medium-sized company can reproduce accurately a production intended for a very large one, it is claimed that this version is a reconstruction on the closest possible lines to the original, having been supervised in every detail by M. Nicolai Sergueeff, former Régisseur-General of the Maryinsky Theatre.

It is obviously impossible to be dogmatic over any matters concerning the revivals of classical ballets, and one company's production is no more likely to be strictly correct than another's. We know that in Soviet Russia numerous alterations have been made, and the International version differs in a number of minor respects from that of the Sadler's Wells Ballet (also originally produced by Sergueeff). One must accept each version on its merits, and this one is extremely interesting in many of its aspects, particularly where it differs from the production we are accustomed to see.

First of all, I was heartily glad to see the *pas de trois* back in its proper place in the first act. The opening of this ballet is a bore, though necessary to get the story going. Petipa obviously knew it and brightened it up with ten minutes of first-rate dancing. Those extra minutes make this act seem half its wonted length; furthermore this interlude emphasises that it is the Prince's birthday which is being officially celebrated by his appearing before his people, who do their best to entertain him. I liked the idea of his wearing a crown, as he undoubtedly would have done, and the whole atmosphere of this act did give the impression of a festival. The drinking episode, too, was far more dignified than we currently get it elsewhere, where everyone behaves like guilty schoolboys caught out in the middle of a midnight feast in the dorm. The mime passage for the queen needs a complete overhaul. It simply is not permissible to allow her to mouth actual words.

The second act adheres fairly closely to the usual productions, though the two leading swans are duplicated at one juncture. As we know that in Russia the *corps de ballet* here numbers thirty-two we can believe this to be authentic. A very effective touch comes when the Prince's friends discover the swan girls. Instead of running on in neat rows the girls flutter in amongst the young men in threes and fours, just as birds will fly blindly into danger when frightened.

There is an addition to the *divertissement* in Act 3 which has an historical interest, though choreographically it is on no higher a level than the other somewhat uninspired set pieces. This is a Venetian Dance to music which is almost certainly not Tchaikovsky. It was probably added after his death prior to the first performance in Petersburg, and helps to confirm the belief that the Dance of the Little Swans is also not by Tchaikovsky but by Drigo. The choreography at the beginning of Odile's solo differs considerably in this version, and, if authentic, is certainly not an improvement, being so vaguely sketched that the ballerina seems not quite to know what she is supposed to be doing—the last thing that should ever happen in a classical *pas*.

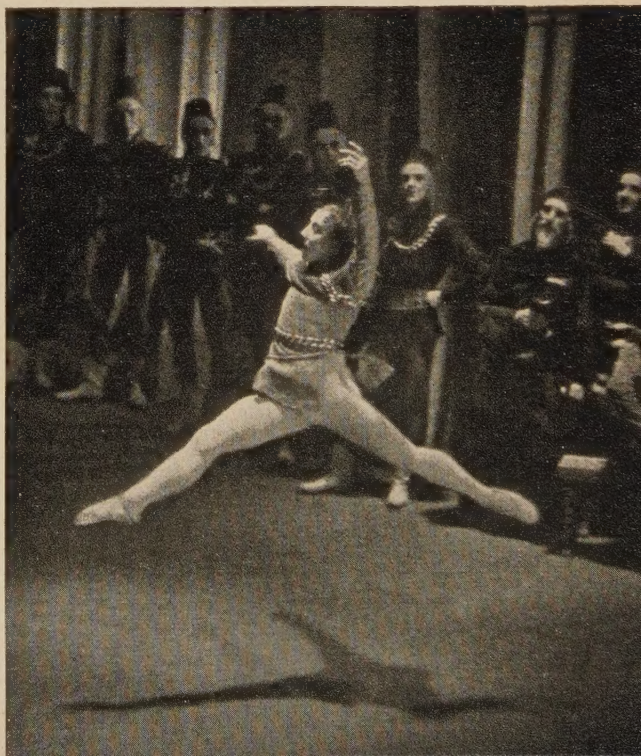
I approved of the fourth act taking place in "another part of the wood", as this makes the Prince's frantic search more convincing. I was less convinced by the icebergs which apparently infested that part of the lake.

William Chappell's décor throughout is disappointing. His colour schemes are harsh and raw with a

(Continued on page 21)

MICHEL DE LUTRY IN THE MALE SOLO OF THE "SWAN LAKE"
PAS DE TROIS

Action photograph by Duncan Melvin





NANA GOLLNER AND PAUL PETROFF IN "COPPELIA", ACT 3

(Photographed during a performance)

Photographs by Duncan Melvin

MONA INGLESBY AS ODILE, WITH JACK SPURGEON, IN "SWAN LAKE", ACT 3



MONA INGLESBY AND JACK SPURGEON IN "COPPELIA", ACT 3



NANA GOLLNER AS ODILE, WITH PAUL PETROFF, IN "SWAN LAKE", ACT 3

"ROMEO AND JULIET" AT THE BOLSHOI THEATRE

By ELENA ROSLAVLEVA

PROKOFIEV'S *Romeo and Juliet*, choreographed by Leonid Lavrovsky of the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, is an outstanding event in the life of ballet. It is a great work of art because it has succeeded in one most important sense. The ballet is not a mechanical trans-plantation of Shakespeare's plot on to the ballet stage. Anything of the kind would have made it a flat sequence of pantomime and *divertissements*. After all, Shakespeare created his tragedy with the intention of rousing emotions through the medium of the spoken word. Lavrovsky's ballet (he is also author of the book, together with Sergei Prokofiev) produces an immense dramatic tension by expressing truly Shakespearean emotions through the language so amply supplied by the classical ballet when properly used as the means and not the end.

Professor Mikhail Morozov—the eminent Shakespearean scholar—said he felt the "pulse of the Shakespearean tragedy throughout the ballet", though he regretted the omission of Shakespeare's contrasting "Falstaffian" second nature in the book.

Romeo and Juliet—in thirteen scenes and a prologue—was first produced by Leonid Lavrovsky at the Leningrad Theatre of Opera and Ballet (former Maryinsky) early in 1940. When I asked him whether the present production is to be considered as a mere revival of his old work, he answered that it was so only as far as his principles in art were concerned. He maintains that ballet should strive to portray real living people with genuine human emotions. He has carried on with this principle since *Fadetta*—his first work in the Leningrad ballet, and it has materialised almost to full satisfaction in the Moscow production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Lavrovsky considers that while this work does not yet deal with the contemporary theme—and such is the present requirement set before art in the Soviet Union—it has paved the way and completely prepared him for his next ballet, Andrei Balanchivadze's (brother of Balanchine) *Life*, a thoroughly contemporary ballet on the last war.

Lavrovsky is now barely forty and besides being Stalin Prize Winner is Art Director of the Bolshoi Theatre Ballet Company. In the Moscow production of *Romeo and Juliet* he has deepened his earlier work and has composed many new dances, such as the troubadours' dance, and most of the crowd scenes.

As a choreographer Lavrovsky maintains that in ballet each movement should answer only the given emotional state of the character which in turn should

have its own "language" expressed in movements typical of that character alone. His Romeo—perfectly portrayed by Mikhail Gabovitch and his young understudy, Yuri Hofman—has nothing in common with the ballet "cavalier". If anything, he is a little too much on the Hamlet side, a Romeo who is always sad and pensive, and would never say "Where shall we dine?" after his lines on love "whose view is muffled still", as in Act 1, but one with very definitely traced features. The same might be said of Juliet. It is natural that Lavrovsky was very much aided by having to work with an outstanding dancer such as Ulanova, and one so perfectly fitted for the part. It is known, too, that Prokofiev composed his music with Ulanova in view. Her innate grace and inspiration contributed in no small measure to the tremendous success of the ballet. Ulanova herself admits she has matured considerably since the 1940 production. The war and years of artistic experience could not fail to leave a trace. She told me she had worked a lot at the ballet, and some parts within a given dance were suggested by herself. Not a single conventional gesture of the old ballet was allowed by the choreographer. There was no *pas de deux* in the traditional sense. High tragedy would not have tolerated that. Juliet's and Romeo's duet with an *adage* in the balcony scene is the closest approach to a *pas de deux*, but there is nothing conventional about it.

The *arabesque* is often used as the main movement of Ulanova's Juliet, but it is at times modified till it almost becomes a stride, yet it remains an *arabesque* and has a great many expressions. The final one, when Juliet rises *en arabesque* for the last time in the ultimate impulse for life and happiness after having taken the sleeping potion, is particularly effective.

Field-Marshal Montgomery would not leave the guest box of the Bolshoi Theatre until he saw Ulanova take the last curtain. He was immensely impressed, and said she floated like a shadow through the stage. As a matter of fact, Ulanova is intrinsically a *terre à terre* dancer. It is her wonderful art and masterful use of the *arabesque* in its many forms which makes her look like a dancer possessing elevation.

Lavrovsky's other principle is that the *danse d'action* dreamt of by Noverre should absorb pantomime. He recognises mime only when it is an integral part of the dance. His best achievement of this kind is the duel scene between Mercutio and Tybalt. Mercutio's dance by Sergei Koren, a character dancer with much *brío*, is both fencing and miming and is completely expressive

of Mercutio's personality. In the Leningrad production Andrei Lopokov, brother of Lydia Lopokova (Lady Keynes), was an unforgettable Mercutio.

Following Tybalt's death by Romeo's sword, Lady Capulet rushes on the stage like a wounded tigress, tears her garments, and being lifted high into the air by her servants on the same stretcher bearing Tybalt's body, she calls for vengeance rousing the entire mass of people on the stage. In this scene over two hundred people perform as one, each having his own movement. Lavrovsky treats the "mass" as one of the characters in the ballet. He spent hours of patient rehearsing till the last understudy in the *corps de ballet* knew the entire score by heart. All of the important crowd scenes such as this one were timed with the music, and many a rehearsal was stopped because a flower vendor in the back was a few bars behind with a simple gesture. Even the curtains and the change of décor are timed because otherwise the next scene might start a second late and the mime would be out of harmony with the music.

This tremendous work produces an effect well worth the effort. Such scenes as the one described invariably cause tremendous applause, and though it concludes

the second act it is really the climax of the ballet. The music in this scene reaches true dramatic tension and is really unforgettable. The street quarrel involving the Montague and Capulet houses in the first act, with old Capulet and Montague coming out last brandishing medieval swords is choreographed on the same principle and leaves no less an impression.

But the ballet is not level in all of its scenes. Capulet's ball and feast in the first act are dominated by the gorgeous décor and costumes of heavy gold and brocade of which Peter Williams, the stage designer, is so fond. It is a very splendid spectacle, particularly the "Cushion Dance" reconstructed by Lavrovsky from drawings of the Renaissance period, but it tends to be too lavish, overshadowing Romeo and Juliet who after all meet for the first time in these scenes.

Yet before the end of the first act Ulanova manages to convey for a split second the foreboding of tragedy when the Nurse whispers Romeo's name into her ears. Incidentally, Lavrovsky departs from Shakespeare's story in one way only: while in the tragedy Juliet is charmed by Romeo's voice, in the ballet she is attracted by Romeo's face when he removes his mask for a minute. This is choreographically more convincing.

THE DEATH OF TYBALT, "ROMEO AND JULIET", ACT 2, SCENE III, AT THE BOLSHOI THEATRE



The ballet is performed by two casts—both admirable. Elena Chikwaidze's Juliet is very different from that of Ulanova's. She is more temperamental and dramatic, is maybe more in conformity with the type of a girl of the Italian Renaissance, while Ulanova is more like the English maiden whom Shakespeare copied for his heroines whatever nationality they happened to be. Chikwaidze attains great dramatic expression when, alone in her bedroom, Juliet takes the sleeping potion. She is a very good dramatic actress with much verve, and even emits a little cry upon drinking the phial. She then runs to the mirror and shudders at the realisation of seeing her reflection for the last time. Choreographically this scene is not ideal by the highest standards, since it is pure mime in which Ulanova does not excel but Chikwaidze does it admirably, while Ulanova remains in a class by herself. Chikwaidze is a Georgian. She received her training in Leningrad and has danced in *The Prisoner in the Caucasus*, *The Heart of the Hills*, *Swan Lake*, *Gaiana*, etc. Her partner, Yuri Hofman, is less experienced a dancer than Gabovitch, but more subtle and possesses a wealth of personal charm. One should mention many other members of

the company—Irina Olenina—a young dancer who performs most excellently the part of the not-too-young nurse, and seventy-five year old Alexei Bulgakov, who is such a marvellous Friar Laurence. One never thought it possible to be so deeply human and philosophical in mime, particularly in the superb betrothal scene in the friar's cell, preserved intact from the original production. One should also mention the character dancers, Jadwiga Sangovitch and Elena Dmitrash, and Juliet's friends—Ludmilla Cherkassova and Valentina Lopukhina in turn, and Elena Ilushchenko who seems to have stepped out of a Renaissance picture as Lady Capulet.

Though "never was a story of more woe", the ballet as a whole does not make the audience inclined to indulge in pessimism. It is a healthy work of art, though the dramatic tension at times is so high I heard many a woman in the audience weep on the first night. Aided by Ulanova, Lavrovsky has brought to life the story of love and devotion conquering death, and the ballet decidedly fulfils the duty of any masterpiece—it makes the spectator feel lifted to better and nobler planes.

STAND-IN

By FERNAU HALL

"HOW tall is Michael Somes?" asks the ballet mistress.

No one seems to know. But there is a general feeling that he has dark hair, and so I get the job. The fact that I do not dance like Michael Somes is of no importance. Stand-ins do not dance. They just stand.

We have to be at Piccadilly Circus at 7.00 a.m. Half-frozen and sleepy, I reflect that there are many more delightful ways of spending Christmas Eve. The girls seem to think so, too. They emerge one by one out of the night, their heads swathed in scarves and their pale faces pinched with the cold. (No point in putting on make-up at this hour of the morning.) They all walk with the characteristic splay-footed hobble of trained dancers—who are anything but glamorous off-stage. Gradually the coach fills up.

The dawn breaks, grey and hostile, as we spin through the suburbs on the way to the studio. The adults huddle in gloomy silence, but the children are revoltingly cheerful. They eat oranges, and clamber over the backs of the seats to talk to each other.

Two hours later we are all queuing up in front of the make-up rooms. I find myself next in line to Margot Fonteyn's stand-in. She is wearing a long white

dress, cut like a nightgown: this is the nearest the wardrobe department can contrive to a tutu. They can do almost nothing for me: I wear a boiled shirt, the casting director's blue pullover, and a pair of bathing trunks. Together we look like a music-hall knockabout act; but no one raises an eyelash. All that matters, I gather, is the tonal values. But I feel remarkably atonal, like a piece by Schönberg.

On my way to the set I meet the ballet mistress, who invites me to warm up by having a class with the children. So I line up with them along a barre which forms part of the set representing a ballet classroom. (The film deals with the life of young dancers.) The pianist strikes up a waltz, and we begin our *pliés*, watched by an attentive crowd of electricians, painters, carpenters, riggers, extras, and so on. To them, no doubt, it is as exciting as the pictures. To us it is just hard work. I feel a complete fool, waving my bare hairy legs among a crowd of children—some podgy, some skinny, but all dressed in elegant maroon practice clothes.

Meanwhile the dummy theatre is being set for a performance of *Les Sylphides*. An enormous backcloth representing a gloomy wood is being jockeyed into

position. The lighting director stands in the middle of the stage, calling down beams of light with the suave magisterial gestures of an orchestral conductor. The cameramen are checking the mechanism of their cameras and loading them with film.

One by one the dancers hurry on the set, wrapped up in sweaters, shawls and dressing gowns. (They have just had an urgent call.) The experienced ones know that it will be a long time before they are needed, and arrive long after those who are dancing in their first film. Some of them begin to warm up, hanging on to the uprights of the steel scaffolding and throwing their legs high in the air.

At last the dancers are called on the stage for a rehearsal. Some of them wear gloves, and their shoulders are still wrapped in woollies—which create a somewhat surrealist effect in combination with their wings and fluffy tutus. Their expressions as they struggle up on their cold points are anything but sylph-like. But Margot Fonteyn dances with the same spontaneous grace as at Covent Garden; she seems equally impervious to the cold and the hardness of the cement floor under the wooden parquet. I stand in the wings, trying to puzzle out how Michael Some whisks his partner off the ground with such ease. One could swear that she weighs no more than a few ounces—possibly a stone or two at the most.

After the rehearsal we settle down for the usual endless period of waiting. The girls perch like great white birds on a row of forms, spreading their ballet skirts up behind them so as not to crush the carefully ironed tarlatan. One girl settles herself in the director's camp-chair; she is disconcerted to hear subdued giggles from the watching crowd behind her—who have a ringside view of her frilly pants through the gap in the canvas back of the seat.

"Joan! Come over here!"

We all know what is biting the director. Joan has complained several times about her bodice, which does rather too much justice to her admirable figure. In fact she makes Jane Russell seem demure.

"Wardrobe!"

One of the wardrobe mistresses hurries up and literally fills the breach with a strip of tarlatan cut from the edge of Joan's skirt. The Hays Office is placated, but at some cost: starched tarlatan is prickly.

After another rehearsal we break off for lunch. An hour later we queue to get our make-up touched up, and come back on the set. The general effect is one of ant-like activity. Riggers are fitting up a gallery in front of the stage with a row of extra spots. A painter on top of a high telescopic ladder is darkening the wooden tops of the wings. A carpenter in overalls dashes across the stage and executes what he thinks is a ballet step, accompanied by loud ironic cheers. A

camera is fitted to a large crane on rubber wheels; the crew of the crane practise a complicated swoop from the centre of the stage back up to the (imaginary) dress circle.

Only the dancers are idle. They sit in chilly boredom, chatting and darning the toes of their point-shoes. (Darning is to a ballet dancer what dishwashing is to a housewife.)

At last the set is ready for shooting. The girls pile on me their sweaters and woollen wrap-overs. But for the spare point-shoes in each pocket and the handbags dangling from my elbows, I would feel exactly like a cricket umpire.

Fonteyn and Some take position at the centre of the backcloth, and the "corpse" spread out in front of them.

"Red light on. This is a take!"

"Quiet, everybody, please. QUIET!"

"Stand by. Turn them over."

"Rolling."

The clapper boy holds up his board, shouts "Scene 216—Take 1", bangs the clapper, and dashes off to the side. The curtains slowly open, and the familiar Nocturne music blares forth from a huge loudspeaker on a trolley. Smoothly and evenly the dancers move outwards on their points. The camera crane swoops in and out again.

Strangely enough, everything goes well on the first take, and the assistant director announces a break for tea. The dancers run madly across the set towards the tea-trolley, but already a long queue has formed. By the time they get to the head of the queue all the mince pies are gone, and they have to be content with bread-and-butter.

Though the first take was perfect, it has to be done again—just in case. But this time everything goes wrong. First the clapper boy waits too long in front of the curtains; then the camera-crane is too late in moving; then the sound department plays the wrong music; and so on. Over and over again the girls totter up on to their points—which by now are almost too painful to stand their weight. They feel miserable, knowing that their dancing is getting worse and worse; and they explain to the director that though their spirits are willing, their toes are weak. He is sympathetic but firm: the scene must be in the can that evening, or the whole shooting schedule will be upset.

At last shooting is finished. The girls hobble to the dressing rooms, slide out of their tutus, and hurry out to the waiting coach. (They will take off their make-up on the way to London.) I join a long queue of extras and collect my pay for the day. The fact that no one asked me to do anything is of no importance. I was there if they wanted me.



VIOLETTA PROKHOROVA AND MICHAEL SIMES IN THE COSSACK DANCE
TWO OF THE DANCES FROM "LA BOUTIQUE FANTASQUE"

Action photographs by Edward Mandinian



ALEXIS RASSINÉ AND FRANKLIN WHITE AS THE SNOB AND THE MELON HAWKER

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY AGAIN

By MARY CLARKE

IN the revival of *The Sleeping Beauty* at Covent Garden this Spring we have seen some of the best dancing the Sadler's Wells Ballet has ever given us, but we have also, it must be admitted, seen some most dispirited and casual behaviour on the part of the company as a whole.

The necessity of the classical ballets to both audience and ballerina alike has often been canvassed, and it is undeniable that they do uniquely educate the one and display the other—but the effect on the rest of a modern ballet company seems to be anything but an unmixed blessing.

The *corps de ballet* and soloists deserve every sympathy: it must be galling indeed to exchange a role in a modern ballet (which usually keeps the dancer well in evidence for the ballet's duration) for even the best of the fairy variations, which means a two-minute solo and then total banishment at the end of the Prologue. That is Petipa's formula for almost every soloist: a few moments brief traffic on the stage followed by hours of "onlooking". It was a formula which doubtless produced magnificent results at the Maryinsky—where members of the *corps de ballet* were well satisfied to spend their careers "*près de la fontaine*"—but modern dancers, used to the freedom and fun of dancing in ballets by Fokine, Massine or Ashton, obviously find the practice wearying rather than salutary in its regimentary effect.

Apart from this (possibly unconscious) lethargy which at times crept over the dancers—an inspired Aurora could always rouse them—and apart from some woeful lapses on the part of the orchestra, standards of performance showed an encouraging improvement on last year's production. Owing to Margot Fonteyn's absence through illness, the honour of dancing the first Aurora, on March 27th, fell to Moira Shearer who showed a considerably greater technical command of the role, which may now be said to be fully within her capabilities. She is light, swift, and precise, and takes a genuine pleasure in her dancing, while the most difficult *adage* she turns to favour and to prettiness, although she must guard against an unpleasant habit of biting her lower lip. Her personality is well suited to the Vision Scene, but I must confess that mere dainty precision does not, for me, make an Aurora. In this respect Aurora is the Juliet of Ballet. The programme may insist on her being but sixteen years old, but the role requires a ballerina of greater years and experience: the freshness and charm of extreme youth alone are helpless against the grandeur of the last act *pas de deux*.

Beryl Grey suffers somewhat from the same handicap, but her larger, more open movements, help her to overcome it. She has added greater control without losing the spontaneity of her first performances, and her Rose Adagio now has a quality of rapturous happiness which is both exciting and oddly moving.

One had expected these two young dancers to show advancement, but it was indeed a memorable evening when Margot Fonteyn returned on April 14th to surpass even her last Aurora. She has heightened the effect of her interpretation in every way; her attack is sharper, her repose quieter, and her whole performance is illumined by real "aristocracy of movement". She smiles a little less often than she used, and the wide-eyed gravity of her walk before the last adagio has a touching dignity. We have many promising dancers at Sadler's Wells, but perhaps never before has it been so obvious that we have one, and only one, *prima ballerina*.

During Helpmann's absence, David Paltenghi has done noble work as the Prince, where his experienced

(Continued on page 31)



Photograph by Edward Mandinian

BERYL GREY AS PRINCESS AURORA

SWAN LAKE—AN ECHO

By JASPER HOWLETT

SOME thirty-odd years ago a young Englishman, working in Leningrad, then called St. Petersburg, who had "frequently been told that I must see the famous Russian ballet", had an opportunity, for "I had the good luck to obtain a splendid seat at the well-known Maryinsky Theatre". The ballet was *Swan Lake*, and the dual role of Odette-Odile was taken by Egorova, a dancer who, as a teacher today, links some of our British dancers with past Russian glories.

Comparatively few English people saw the Imperial Ballet in Russia, and though the writer of this account modestly describes himself as "not ordinarily appreciative of ballet", his profession of accountancy fostered gifts of accuracy and lucid expression which make his reminiscences particularly interesting to ballet lovers. He was so impressed that, some three decades after, he could write out the "story" of the piece, and as ballet is so largely handed down by word of mouth and example, it is illuminating to see how closely this description tallies with the version given by the Sadler's Wells Ballet now.

"The friends of Prince Siegfried are celebrating his coming of age when the feast is interrupted by the arrival of his mother, who tells him that this is the last day of his bachelorhood and that in the morning he must choose a bride. She arranges a ball, to which are invited all the maidens worthy of becoming the wife of her son, and the prince has to make his choice. He is downhearted, as he is quite happy as he is, but his friends comfort him and the feast continues. A flock of swans fly past and the day is brought to a close".

This might be a programme note at the Wells today, and the second act follows equally closely, with the appearance of the huntsmen, the swans, the transformation of the swans to girls—only the Evil Genius, usually portrayed now as a bat, was then an owl. The next act swings through the story of the intrigues of the Evil Genius and his daughter Odilia, who impersonates Odetta, to the final act.

"The swan girls await the return of Odetta. She relates the treachery and her friends comfort her. Siegfried arrives. In preference to his marrying Odilia and Odetta remaining a swan they determine to die together. Evil Genius is in fear, as this would mean his destruction. Odetta ascends a rock and Evil Genius lies above her in the form of an owl in order to change her into a swan. Siegfried and Odetta throw themselves into the lake. An owl falls dead".

The interesting point here is that the lovers determine to die together. In the present Wells version, where,

as in the earlier Russian one, the Evil Genius appears as an owl and not a bat, though the costume does not make this clear, the lovers die separately. "Odette meanwhile has thrown herself into the lake, and Siegfried, seeing no future happiness in life, drowns himself also".

The account of Odetta in the Russian version ascending a rock from which the couple throw themselves into the lake, suggests one of those scenic effects beloved of the Imperial Theatre, and rather frowned upon here today, recalling Karsavina's delicious description of the shipwreck in *Le Corsair*. "What the stage directions were I never quite knew", she writes in *Theatre Street*, "but we took them to be *ad libitum*", and how "when the caravel split and sank in two tidy halves, my female attendants and I screamed", then a scurry to the wings where "I hastily put on a white chemise and let down my hair preparatory to appearing on a crag now jutting out over a quickly pacified sea", and "struck the final apotheosis". The machinery which worked the crag no doubt produced the rock effect for Odetta in *Swan Lake*.

But the best of the Imperial Ballet far outweighed its cruder moments, and for the young Englishman over thirty years ago the evening was one of enchantment. "The scene in the foyer during the intervals was a gay one, with the bright uniforms of the officers and the lovely frocks and jewels of the ladies. The entrance to the Imperial Box was guarded by two soldiers of the Guards, who touched the daggers hanging at their waists every time an officer passed". The scenery was "magnificent" and the "whole setting superb", and "the haunting beauty of Tchaikovsky's music, interpreted by an incomparable orchestra, and the ethereal loveliness of the principal ballerina, Egorova, and the *corps de ballet*, left an impression on me which the years that have gone have failed to erase".

Andrei Lopokov

ANDREI LOPOKOV, brother of Lydia Lopokova, and the greatest Soviet character dancer, died in Leningrad on May 23rd. He was only forty-nine. Famed for his expressiveness and perfect line, in addition to his career as a dancer, he was the leading teacher of character dancing. When his death was announced during the graduation examinations at Moscow Ballet School, all present rose in tribute.

“LA FÊTE ETRANGE” AT SADLER’S WELLS

ANDRÉE HOWARD'S *La Fête Etrange* was first produced at the Arts Theatre, London, in 1940. It was revived by the Sadler's Wells Opera Ballet on March 25th, with a slight enlargement of cast, in an endeavour to counteract the lack of intimacy which is one of the most formidable features of Sadler's Wells Theatre in its post-war phase. For *La Fête Etrange* is essentially a ballet of *nuance* and atmosphere and, alas! taken out of the framework in which it was created, it has become bruised. Never clear in outline—that was its subtlety and its fascination—it now becomes so blurred as to be almost meaningless, and this young company are completely out of their depth. They know how to dance it but have no idea what it means. This is especially true of Donald Britton as the boy who is drawn into the celebrations of a betrothal party and unwittingly brings about an estrangement between the girl, with whom he falls in love, and the nobleman whom she is to marry. Britton is one of the two most promising male dancers in the Sadler's Wells organisations, but he is not yet nearly experienced enough to put over the implications (they are never statements)

of this role. Neither has Anthony Burke, in stasis, the authority needed for the nobleman. On the other hand, June Brae was never better than she is here as the girl, her youthful beauty being balanced by experience, and her sensitive interpretation nearly succeeds in holding the ballet together in the far too long passages which precede each climax.

The orchestration by Lennox Berkeley is too heavy and “English” for Fauré—rather as though one cook had started out to make a soufflé which was taken over by another cook who turned it into a Yorkshire pudding. However, one sighs with pleasure at the combination of exquisite taste and simplicity which are Sophie Fedorovitch's unique gifts to English ballet design.

Although much of the choreography is repetitive, consisting largely of *arabesques*, alone, supported *à terre* or *en l'air*, it has the distinction which belongs to Andrée Howard's best work. *La Fête Etrange*, in short, remains a ballet of mystery and peculiar charm which is out of place in its present environment.

P.W.M.

ANTHONY BURKE, JUNE BRAE AND DONALD BRITTON IN “LA FÊTE ETRANGE”

Photograph by Edward Mandinian



FOUR SOUTH AFRICAN BALLETS

By HANNES EBENSTEN

IT is becoming quite a favourite occupation of late to compile lists of ballets, lists of dancers and lists of anything at all. I have therefore decided to compile such a list too, and chosen as its theme *My Favourite South African Ballets*. Firstly, it gives me—as almost everyone else—vast pleasure to make up a list and pick out a limited number of ballets out of the comparatively many that have been seen in the Union, and secondly, I feel sure that the themes, dancers and stories of some of our South African ballets will not fail to interest those who know so very little about us.

But let me first give an indication of the background against which the Ballet is trying to establish itself there. Not so very long ago an unfortunate male dancer was shouted off the stage of a Capetown theatre for appearing in a performance of ballet, then looked upon as a totally female occupation. Today our male dancers are generally accepted as necessary parts of ballet, but even at a performance of *Les Sylphides* which I witnessed in 1946, the *danseur* had been forced by public feeling to appear in black evening suit trousers, tights being considered shocking and indecent for a man. That ballet should exist and advance at all in a country where audiences are so ignorant, and generally most apathetic, is therefore a fact at which one can only be amazed.

Without much knowledge of contemporary ballet in England or elsewhere, and unable to gather inspiration except from films or books, efforts have been made during the past years to establish an interest in ballet amongst the European population in the larger towns which lie separated from each other by many hundreds of miles. Although there is no acknowledged centre of ballet, Capetown holds that position unofficially, whilst in the Transvaal ballet centres around Johannesburg and the studios there draw on their pupils from the densely populated towns on the Reef and Pretoria, where comparatively large audiences can also be found to support any new company. Towards the end of last year a touring company has tried, as an experiment, to visit the Reef towns, and proved how successful such an undertaking can be.

Tours covering the entire country, however, would be the ideal solution to foster a general interest in ballet amongst a population who live thinly scattered over a very large area. In the outlying districts people have seldom, if ever, seen ballet or even theatre of any kind. Yet there are great difficulties that hamper such a national touring company. Long distances make travel with even a small company and its luggage difficult as well as most costly, and the Government has so far not deemed it fit to support any of the local

groups in any manner, or enabled them at least to plan these ambitious schemes.

Miss Dulcie Howes with her University of Capetown Ballet Club has not let this lack of interest stand in her way, though, and has begun to lay the foundations for a national ballet through the aid of the Witwatersrand University and the Rhodesian Government, with whose collaboration she has presented many successful seasons in Johannesburg and a tour through Rhodesia, as well as regular performances in her own Capetown.

Another company which resides in Capetown, the Capetown Ballet Club, is fortunate in having the services of Yvonne Blake and Cecily Robinson, the former of whom has contributed many original ballets, while Miss Robinson has been invaluable in producing from her personal knowledge such classical ballets as *Les Sylphides*, *Swan Lake*, *Spectre de la Rose*, *Prince Igor* and *Carnaval*. The Club has recently shown great initiative in inviting Frank Staff out to the Union to produce some of his ballets for them, and the two seasons thus given have created new interest in the Club's activities. The Club has, however, not toured the country with these productions, and is thereby neglecting what seems to be a major aim towards the establishment of a national ballet.

In Johannesburg ballet is under municipal support and supervision. Its outlook is academic and staid, and its committee too cautious to allow young choreographers to write for its two yearly seasons. It is the teachers of dancing who rule the ballet stage here, with the exception of Marjory Sturman who astonished audiences last September with her witty and well-conceived burlesque, *Incidents at the Ball*—scenes in an Edwardian ball-room that are the first step to a freer feeling. In Johannesburg, too, is Teda de Moor, with her Dance-Drama group, who has trained both Europeans and non-Europeans and has presented performances of both sections. Her native performance showed the remarkable sense of drama and theatre which the natives naturally possess, and their simplicity and swift change from the hilarious to the deeply moving was magnificent. This performance—given to the accompaniment of a native orchestra consisting chiefly of drums—was unfortunately the only one of its kind. Necessitated by an almost complete lack of support except from a few private persons, Miss de Moor has since been unable to repeat her very interesting experiment.

The Cape, where the Eoan group have a non-European ballet section, is incidentally as yet the only province in which it is possible for a non-European



Photograph by Anne Fischer

FRANK STAFF AND DELYSIA JACOBS IN "L'APRÈS MIDI D'UN FAUNE"
PRODUCED BY THE CAPETOWN BALLET CLUB

company to play in the municipal theatres, and since practically all other theatres are owned by one concern who also assume a policy of complete colour segregation, it is practically impossible for non-Europeans to present any performances at all, or even to attend shows by Europeans and thereby gather inspiration or knowledge.

So much for the background. As to the ballets I have chosen, let me begin by saying that these are not necessarily the best, or the most popular, but rather my own personal favourites.

They are: one by Dulcie Howes—*St. Valentine's Night*; one by Jasmine Honore—*Ancient Lights*; one by John Cranko—*Soldier's Tale*, and one by Teda de Moor—*The Wedding*.

St. Valentine's Night, to music by Mottl, has all the ingredients which a good valentine should possess. Here are bits of lace, pink ribbons, delicate bows, dainty curls, red hearts and even redder roses which Pierrot offers to his nine lady guests. Here—quite apart from being the ideal opening ballet of any programme—Miss Howes has given us a bit of Victoriana, sweet and sugary, that does, nevertheless, not for a moment go off into the realms of chocolate-box covers. The girls flit, skip and drift hither and thither in pairs or threes, giggle coyly and point with gloved hands, while the sentimental, romantic Pierrot searches amongst them for his true love. With such

charm and grace does he distribute his roses amongst them, that it is easy to forgive him for his negligence in having—alas!—one rose too few. This defect is, however, soon rectified by a touching exchange of paper hearts, and all ends well with the happy pair, their arms entwined, blissfully happy on a white garden seat which glitters in the moonlight.

Jasmine Honore's *Ancient Lights* (Variations on "Underneath the Spreading Chestnut Tree" by Weinberger) is one of the very few South African ballets dressed in modern, everyday costumes and set in a daily scene—a slum. Setting aside any "social" aspects of the theme—a day in the life of the slum's inhabitants, their troubles and joys—and concentrating only on the visual side of the ballet, one cannot help admiring the deft, clever and so really spirited manner in which this choreographer sets scene after scene before us.

With the exception of a few brief moments, all is fun and games: the inquisitive social workers (Drink Milk Daily), the mother perpetually beset by her screaming brood, the Happiness League with its brass band and copper collection—all these become bright, burlesque characters, behaving in hardly a normal, but in a most entertaining manner. Only the down-and-out and his scantily dressed girl friend, danced with great tenderness and expression by David Poole and Rene Feller, add a bitter, real touch to this gay picture of

slum-life, but in this nostalgic dance lies all the sadness and the bleakness of the world. Even a police interruption is hardly taken seriously by these care-free people, and it is in a moment of almost carnival-like gaiety that both young and old join hands to dance merrily around their very, very sparse chestnut tree as the curtain falls.

Soldier's Tale, to Stravinsky's sophisticated, partly jazzy music, was the first ballet of John Cranko, who was only sixteen when it was first produced in Capetown.

Soldiers, returning wearily from war, reach a village where they are warmly welcomed by maidens and their leader succumbs to the charms of the Scarlet Woman. A Devil, mischievous, destructive but lovable, appears and contrives by various ruses, such as that of disguising himself as a beautiful girl, to amuse himself in causing havoc and death amongst the soldiers, and finally by playing ferociously on his violin, to force the villagers to dance to death. Only the chief soldier, stopping his ears, is able to escape—to fall exhausted in front of the dropcloth at the end of the ballet.

Rightly speaking, this is not the Soldier's tale at all but the Devil's, for it is he who controls everyone at all times, playing with them like pawns in his game, a game of wrecking and destroying, of interference and final triumph. But we are thrown a hint that his

triumph is hardly long-lived, for when he stands, alone, high above the still forms of all the dead below, it is not a look of satisfaction that he throws us, but one of puzzlement at his own work.

Soldier's Tale has been called droll, satirical, farcical or merely clever fun. No one, however, can deny the pathos and genuine sorrow so well expressed in scenes such as the dance of lament of the four maidens amongst the dead bodies of their soldiers, who lie, forming a great star, with their feet as its centre. The *pas de deux* of the Soldier and the Scarlet Woman, the latter superbly interpreted by Pamela Chrimes, showed a force and inventiveness of movement that make these few minutes into some of the most memorable of the South African stage.

The Wedding, which Teda de Moor presented for a short season in Johannesburg during 1944, remains in my memory as the most beautiful, restful ballet ever shown in the Union. Miss de Moor divided her *corps* into three equal parts each of whom represented, and followed, a different type of instrument in the orchestra. In long, quiet costumes of three pale subtle shades—honey brown, stone grey, and steel blue—they continuously provided a living background, suggesting lofty Gothic architecture, to the principal dancers, the Bride, the Groom and their friends. The careful grouping, pattern and balance, as well as the carefree



ograph by Constance Stuart



Photograph by J. G. Galt

VICTOR GSOVSKY REHEARSES COLETTE MARCHAND AND SERGE PERRAULT IN THE NOCTURNE FROM "DANCES OF GALANTA"
ONE OF THE BALLETS IN THE REPERTOIRE OF THE METROPOLITAN BALLET NOW TOURING THE PROVINCES

rendering of the role of the flippant, flirtatious Bride (danced by Teda de Moor), combined to make this into a work of the very greatest charm and enjoyment. The music—Bach's 202nd Cantata—includes a solo voice. The singer, dressed as one of the *corps de ballet*, was placed unobtrusively at the side of the stage, and in no way detracted from the whole, but added to the general feeling of space and peace.

Dulcie Howes speaks of writing no more ballets, Teda de Moor has been unable to present a performance for many months owing to lack of support, and John Cranko and Jasmine Honore have left South Africa. Their loss to the country is great, and those who do remain must encourage young choreographers to arise from the ranks of dancers. To write ballets must never again become the privilege of those successful dancing teachers who wish to exhibit the talent they have accumulated in their studios.

At the moment, ballet is being kept alive by various individuals, or by groups and committees. The aim of everyone connected with it is to establish, as soon as possible and practicable, a truly national ballet company which could tour firstly the whole country, and later other countries, so as to show what has been done in the Union. Miss Howes' Rhodesian tour, and a film that was made of her ballet, *Bach Suite*, are only the beginnings of her efforts to bring about an exchange of thoughts and ideas. Frank Staff, during his visit to Capetown, expressed his eagerness to take a South African company to London with a repertoire of their own ballets. Such a tour would not only be highly interesting to the English theatre-goer, but the advice and encouragement given to the dancers would be of enormous value to them. It is only to be hoped that the plans for this project are not shelved and neglected, but will soon be turned into actual facts.

Balanchine's 'Serenade'

BALANCHINE'S new production of *Serenade* for the Paris Opera is but a partially successful venture, but a welcome departure from its usual tradition of over-elaborate 'décor and paucity of choreographic invention.

Serenade tells no definite story, but evokes a disturbing, hidden emotional suspense, and if the dancers could realise the beauty of Balanchine's ideas, the result would be extremely agreeable, although it is by no means such an important work as *Apollo* or *Cotillon*. As it is, M. Michel Renault dances delightfully, with refreshing intelligence, and Mlle. Vaussard manages her difficult role well, but the *corps de ballet* is incapable of interpreting the precise nuances which are so essential to the success of any Balanchine ballet.

The strings of the orchestra play the unusually cool and attractive Tchaikovsky music beautifully, but the *arrangement décoratif* and costumes of André Delfau are nondescript and make one wish to have seen Ballet Caravan's production with Tchelitchev's designs.

HANS WILD.

'La Sylphide'-A Correction

The Editor,

Ballet Today.

Dear Madam,

I am told that on two occasions your Paris correspondent has stated that the choreography of the revival of *La Sylphide* is by Roland Petit.

In actual fact the choreography was mounted complete on the company by Victor Gsovsky during the last Champs-Élysées tour of England. For "reasons of state", however, it was thought inadvisable to mention Gsovsky's name on the Paris programme and the choreography was therefore stated to be "After Philip Taglioni".

I was present at two rehearsals of the ballet in Paris as well as the opening performance, and was also present the day after the first night, when Petit, Gordon Hamilton and Kochno discussed with some amusement one reviewer's assumption that the choreography was by Hamilton! Actually Hamilton, then *maître de ballet*, was in charge of all the Paris rehearsals, but they were based entirely on the choreography devised by Gsovsky in England. Petit had no hand in the choreography although he made one suggestion, which was adopted, with regard to the repetition of a *motif* in the musical score. The construction of the ballet was based on the original scenario and Philip Taglioni's personal notes.

Before leaving France I asked if it were permissible for the true choreographer to be named in England, and was told there was nothing against this; indeed,



Action photograph by Jacques Mairesse

TAMARA TOUMANOVA IN "GISELLE", ACT I, AT THE PARIS OPERA

it was felt Gsovsky's work deserved acknowledgment where this was possible. I therefore named him as choreographer in an article on the ballet some months ago.

Yours, etc.,

AUDREY WILLIAMSON.

(Hans Wild writes:—At the time when my article was written, I was requested not to mention Gsovsky's name as choreographer for *La Sylphide* but to adhere to the information given in the French programme, and I understand that it would have been a breach of faith to have done so. However, I am glad to know that Miss Williamson's critical enthusiasm surmounts the difficulties of publishing information given to us in confidence, although if her article was not circulated in Paris, there can have been no harm done.)

Blackburn Ballet Club

THIS club is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. Like those at Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle and Bristol, the Blackburn Ballet Club has its own productions and gives performances at the Community Theatre, Blackburn. Balletomanes in that neighbourhood who are interested should write to the Secretary, Miss K. M. West, 6 Azalea Road, Blackburn.

THE QUESTION OF THE SMALL COMPANIES

By KATHRINE SORLEY WALKER

ONE of the ways in which ballet in England is different from any known in the past is the fact that for two full-stage companies it has a large and increasing number of small ones. They constitute a living for many artists, an interest for many people, and, in most cases, a problem for the critical member of the public.

This last was not the case in the 1930's, when the Ballet Club and the Vic-Wells were young. Between them they represented English Ballet, and employed most of the best talent in the country, and they both, as we know now, had a particular stake in the future. It was for the Wells to become the national company, and the Rambert (successor to the Ballet Club) to act as the premier exponent of "chamber" ballet.

Since those days, however, a surprising number of small companies have come and gone, and at the present moment we have as many as seven in existence in this country.

First, let us summarise the contribution to date of such companies. They have provided a training ground from which a number of now well-known dancers have graduated; they have taken ballet to many remote spots, and during the war to canteens and garrison theatres, from which the larger companies have been debarred because of their size, and therefore helped to entertain entirely new audiences and initiate them into the ballet idiom; they have mounted choreographic work which has allowed promising artists to gain experience. This on the asset side; and obviously their existence, from the point of view of the working artist and the small-town audience, is more than justified. But can the critic be so easily satisfied?

No unbiased onlooker can fail to note many points about such companies which are dangerous to ballet in all its phases, and it is well to be quite frank about these for once.

Most small companies suffer particularly from a well-intentioned desire to revive classical and Fokine ballets, and the result is that audiences all over the country are introduced to Act 2 of *Swan Lake*, or *Sylphides*, in forms which are frequently far below the required standard. It is not only difficult to discipline a *corps de ballet* of young and inexperienced girls into these works, but it is often impossible to cast all the leading rôles at all satisfactorily. One may have a Swan Queen of sufficient technical qualifications and much of the right feeling; but it is quite likely that the leading swans will not be even adequate. So, in

Sylphides, one good mazurka dancer does not compensate for a poor waltz and a poorer prelude. Under these circumstances it would be kinder not to attempt the classical education of the public except perhaps in the legitimate *divertissement* variations from *Sleeping Beauty* and *Casse Noisette*; and these only where the dancers can approximate recognised contemporary versions of the choreography.

The rest of the repertoire in such small companies is usually composed of the work of one choreographer (who is probably director or chief dancer) with here and there a *divertissement* ballet from one of the dancers who inclines towards production. It can be taken as fact that no choreographer is capable of providing the entire, or even the major part, of the repertoire of a company and retain his or her best standard throughout. In addition, it is a practice which quickly brings an appearance of monotony to the general outlook. We see the point of this on remembering that the Rambert, which, although not clear of faults, is the small company *par excellence*, has in the past enjoyed the talents of many choreographers, and this has given it a variety of production unusual for its size; while the strength of the Wells lies in its admirably contrasted trio of major choreographers as much as in any other single factor.

The small company, however, often either cannot or will not profit by these examples, and the result is that its repertoire revolves round one or possibly two interesting (if not major) ballets supported by a number of hack works and an occasional tentative effort by a more or less talented beginner. On this point of choreography it cannot be said too firmly nor too often that it is the most highly skilled branch of ballet and, in its best examples, of any art; and in consequence many who call themselves choreographers are little more than dance-arrangers. The good choreographer is a much rarer person than the average ballet-goer realises, and the number of true ballets in the repertoire of small companies, as opposed to *divertissements* and dance-arrangements, is quite low. However divided opinion may be on the question of what constitutes a ballet, it would probably be generally accepted that an arrangement on a hackneyed theme which shows no fresh invention in sentiment or dance technique and has no harmony of design, music and choreography does not fit the bill; and these, alas, are all too frequently produced.

From the point of view of the dancers, there would

also appear to be dangers. In a small company they can, of course, get training, experience of the stage, and employment; on the other hand, they spend the greater part of their time rehearsing and dancing rôles which contribute nothing to their technical or, even more important, mental development. In addition, they are allowed to put over their personality in solo *divertissements* which exercise a revue flamboyance without the revue's efficiency, and this, unwise in the case of experienced artists, can be disastrous where young dancers are concerned.

There is, of course, no solution to these problems, except through the good sense of the companies themselves, and the reaction of their audiences to them; and unfortunately, their ways usually lie among the new, and therefore indiscriminating, portion of the public, which either accepts everything enthusiastically, or, if more judicious, may, if shown a weak programme or poor dancing, form a prejudice against ballet which nothing can eradicate.

From the viewpoint of the more regular ballet-goer, their contribution to the art, which has not yet been striking if considered as a whole, would be at its most valuable if they were careful not to put on sub-standard works; to keep those items of their repertoire which are fresh, unpretentious and charming in the best possible state of preservation; to refrain from attacks on classic works outside their range; to encourage promising choreographers and designers, but to confine their efforts to works suitable for small-scale presentation and the capabilities of their dancers; and, above all, to put the general cause of ballet before any questions of self-advancement. If these aims are achieved—as they can be—the small company takes its true place as an instrument which can give pleasure and instruction to audiences beyond the reach of the full-size ballet company.

International Ballet (continued from page 5)

predominating ginger, and Odile's dull black costume was the reverse of enchanting. When Nana Gollner danced this role she wore the best dress I have yet seen—black with a shimmering green like a starling's plumage. He was right to give the potential fiancées six different designs, since each was there to try to catch Siegfried's eye. His best set was for the third act, which really had the look of a banquetting hall in an inhabitable and inhabited castle.

The Adelphi stage is too small for a production of this size and the *corps de ballet* was often cramped. In the *pas de trois* Michel de Lutry displayed a notable elevation, smooth strength and precision. When whatever necessary has been done to overcome his present breathing difficulties, he will be a noteworthy addition to the already formidable list of present-day French male dancers.

Mona Inglesby's Odette-Odile is by far her best achievement to date. Her Odette has a positive quality of purity, while she dances it with a regal authority I have not seen in her before. Her Odile needs developing, but she is on the right lines if she can only persuade herself to let fly. Odile must have attack and glitter and at the moment we have only the promise of these.

Nana Gollner's appearance in this ballet had been anticipated with eagerness, for much was expected of her from remembrance of her before the war and in view of the reputation she has built up in America. No doubt her illness had left her with less than her usual strength, and we must wait until the next London season before we can make final judgment. Much that she does is brilliant, but, surprisingly, this brilliance was more in evidence in the second than in the third act. Her fire was somewhat out of place for Odette, and then when we expected to see it in Odile it was strangely missing. Her supported turns and her *arabesque* are worth going miles to see, and possibly her illness had something to do with her hunched shoulders—the neck is the first thing to disappear when a dancer is out of form.

She later danced in *Coppélia* and again had some dazzling moments, particularly in the second act (though the Spanish and Scottish dances were a little disappointing), and in the third act *pas de deux*, which was a miracle of confidence and timing. On the whole, however, she failed to supply the sparkle that has always been missing from the International *Coppélia*. All the same, I am confident that London understandably did not see the best of Gollner.

In both ballets Paul Petroff displayed the impeccable partnering remembered since 1939. He has that ease and assurance which makes a partner ninety per cent. invisible—one only sees him when one is intended to. On the debit side must be recorded that his dancing is no longer impressive and his ideas on mime are rudimentary.

Jack Spurgeon is Miss Inglesby's partner in the classical ballets and combines sound support with a pleasant, unassuming manner.

Throughout the season the orchestra was wildly erratic, and the *tempi* for *Coppélia* were, as always, invariably much too slow or else taken at a gallop. It seems easier nowadays to find dancers than musicians capable of accompanying them.

P. W. M.

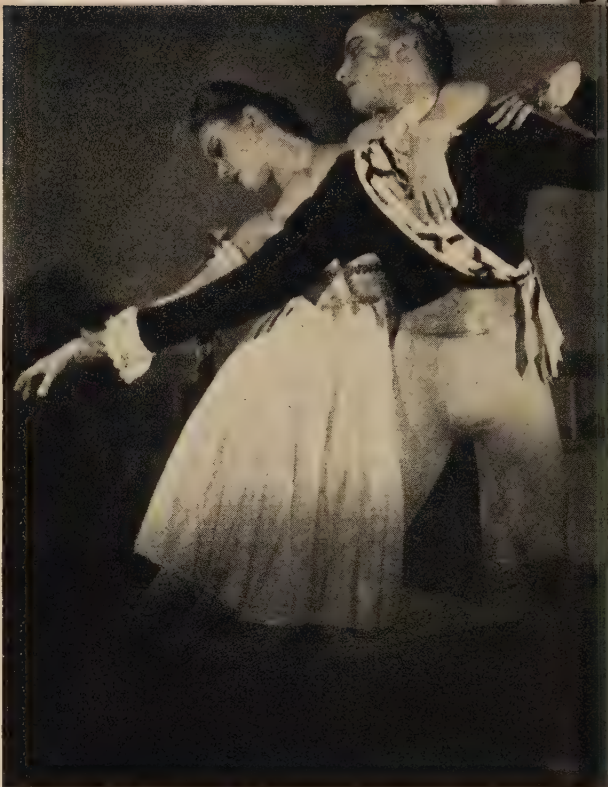
The Frank Sharman action photograph on the cover shows Mona Inglesby and Jack Spurgeon in "Swan Lake", Act 3, by International Ballet

Ballet Rambert

BALLET RAMBERT'S six weeks' season at Sadler's Wells which began on May 19th will be their last appearance in London for a long time as they are off to Australia on August 17th for a year. They are taking a very large repertoire with them and are travelling right across the United States and then sailing again from San Francisco. Their time schedule, however, will not allow them any appearances in America.

Walter Gore's new ballet, *Plaisance* (music Rossini, décor and costumes Harry Cordwell), was given on the opening night at the Wells. It is a light-hearted *divertissement*, based on sundry meetings and partings. Though neither the theme nor the treatment are new, the ballet is undoubtedly pleasant to watch and gives us the opportunity to see, displayed at its best, John Gilpin's increasing precision of *batterie* and clarity of line. This alone would be a sufficient justification for its inclusion in the programme, but the whole work has a lightness of touch and a tenderness which is rare nowadays and which makes it a welcome addition to the Rambert repertoire.

FRANK JACKSON.



Photograph by Duncan Melvin

BELINDA WRIGHT AND JOHN GILPIN IN "PLAISANCE"

"OKLAHOMA!" AT DRURY LANE

By ALAN STOREY

"EVERYTHING is a dangerous drug except reality, which is unendurable", Palinurus reflects. "Happiness is in the imagination". No doubt the American would agree, for he appears to carry with him, in his exile, the image of a never-never land; he is a Romantic with nostalgic longings for a myth which has, for him, taken the place of history.

Certainly, much of *Oklahoma!*'s success is due to its dazzling manifestation of this self-deception. Here all the girls are "honeys", all the men tall in the saddle, the corn ever yellow, and the sky ever blue. For though sex may rear its ugly head, in a manner reminiscent of Eugene O'Neill, we know that retribution, according to the rough justice of prairie law, will fall at last!

But *Oklahoma!* is rather more than a subtle anticipation of wartime feeling. In touching the heights of Light Theatre, its producers have broken completely from the conventions of stock musical-comedy and the regimented cohorts of the Hollywood "musical".

They have introduced into their Arcady an *élan vital*, a Dionysian worship of Youth and Spring, with a zest and contagious excitement that emphasises the insipidity of our own native products.

Moreover, they have achieved a remarkable homogeneity and balance. Humour, song, and dance are no longer interruptions but a natural development of the theme, and all are presented with the deceptive simplicity which is the key-note of the show. In recent years America has revealed a marked ability for assimilating ballet technique into the expression of its national life. *Billy the Kid*, *Barn Dance* and *Fancy Free* are, from this point of view, significant achievements in the history of Ballet. And, in *Oklahoma!*, Miss Agnes de Mille has left her recent stylisations far behind to join her contemporaries. Her dances are not really remarkable, but they have a spontaneity and lack of self-consciousness which is extremely refreshing in such entertainment. She has used the classical technique but avoided the full *pointe* in her adaptations of country dances. There

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BALLET IN NEW YORK

By MURRAY N. FRIEDMAN

THE spring ballet season in New York, now drawing to a close, has been the fullest in recent memory, but withal has not been especially noteworthy. From February to mid-May, the season has extended almost continuously. Without anything sensational in the way of novelties, attendance has been only fairly good. I am now convinced that New York's ballet public is neither as large nor as enthusiastic as London's. The 'Battle of Ballets', with one major company after another vying for popular favour, has harmed the position of all of them.

What would have happened this spring had the Ballets des Champs-Élysées fulfilled their promised engagement is open to conjecture. My own guess is that they would have cleared the air somewhat and forced both the public and the companies to re-examine their standards.

The cold facts of economics may do far more to shape next year's ballet picture than the jeremiads of the critics. The adequacy of high wartime and post-wartime incomes has faded considerably in the face of a rising cost of living. No longer is it sufficient to ring up the curtain to be assured of capacity houses. Ballet will have to compete against other forms of entertainment for public support, and to do that successfully the careless and the shoddy will have to be eliminated.

A new group that promises much is the recently-formed Ballet Society, sponsored by Mr. Lincoln Kirstein. During the ballet year now drawing to a close, four performances will have been presented to a limited audience. Talented young choreographers like John Taras, Todd Bolender, William Dollar and Lew Christensen, as well as Georges Balanchine, have been represented by new works. Eager and talented students of the School of American Ballet, seasoned by guest stars, have comprised the personnel. This year has been in the nature of a rehearsal, and the subscription performances have been given at a high-school auditorium, so perhaps it is best to defer to the suggestion of the sponsors and wait until next year before passing critical judgment. For next year an augmented company, good theatres, and a brief tour, are promised. It is significant, I believe, that some of the outstanding young dancers of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo (Marie-Jeanne has been mentioned prominently in this connection) are leaving the older company to join this young organisation. All present indications are that Ballet Society will prove a real contribution to contemporary ballet life in America.

Before proceeding to recapitulate what we have seen in New York, I should like to observe that the most

tempting presentation never materialised. I refer to the scheduled season of Les Ballets des Champs-Élysées. English readers may be interested in the sequence of events that accompanied the fiasco.

We in America had heard much from France and from England of the gifted Ballets des Champs-Élysées, so that it was with considerable anticipation that we awaited the season at the Broadway Theatre, which last autumn played host to Ballet Theatre. One fine day, Boris Kochno, Roland Petit and Gordon Hamilton dropped from the skies via air clipper, prepared to arrange for the arrival of the troupe. The sets and costumes were in America, and everything seemed to be going smoothly, when suddenly the bottom fell out of the plan. The American producer, who had offered them such a handsome guarantee and made so many fine promises, apparently discovered that there was no possibility of clearing a large fortune for his share. So he withdrew, unilaterally, from the agreement.

Meanwhile, several thousand pounds had already been expended by the French company itself in preliminary expenses. Furthermore, no theatre was available. The Broadway had been leased to another attraction, the Metropolitan Opera House was being used by the Original Ballet Russe, and a season of grand opera was being held at the City Center. Minus their choreographer, *maître de ballet* and artistic director, the main body of the troupe was vegetating in Paris. When a flying visit by the owner of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées was unsuccessful in arranging terms for a tour, the group, rather confused by American theatre ethics, flew disconsolately back to Paris.

Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo appeared in New York for a six-weeks' season at the City Center. As the season progressed, empty seats became increasingly apparent, and it is felt that next year's season will be shorter.

Writing about Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo means first of all writing about Alexandra Danilova. She is the first lady of ballet in America, and one of the perpetual wonders. Looking younger than ever, she seems to be dancing better all the time. In *The Nutcracker*, in *Coppélia*, in *Raymonda*, *Baiser de la Fée*, *Night Shadow*, *Swan Lake*, *Danses Concertantes*, *Le Beau Danube*, *Gaieté Parisienne*, and any others which she graces with her presence, she is superb. If her technique falters a trifle, she recovers instantly and captures your heart in the next moment. Almost the only thing in the repertoire she has not done is *Frankie and Johnny*, and I for one would like to see her try Frankie—at least once.

A ballet which pleased the Champs-Élysées contingent was *Gaieté Parisienne*. Gordon Hamilton, who had not seen it danced since the pre-war London season, came again and again. The Offenbach music and Massine choreography make a delightful combination. It would not surprise me if M. Massine were commissioned, one of these days, to mount the ballet for the Ballets des Champs-Élysées.

Valerie Bettis, one of America's leading "modern" dancers, attempted a wedding of the "modern" and "traditional" forms in a new work for the company, a period piece entitled *Virginia Sampler*. Music was by the gifted young composer-pianist Les Smit, and scenery and costumes were by Charles Elson. It is difficult to describe the action of the ballet, which is set in colonial Virginia, since it is largely a ballet of mood. As an experiment it was quite interesting, but it left something to be desired. It is to be hoped that Miss Bettis can be persuaded to do another ballet for the company, for she surely has something significant to say.

Frederic Franklin, Leon Danielian, Marie-Jeanne, Ruthanna Boris and Maria Tallchief performed ably throughout the season. A pleasant surprise has been the development of Harriet Toby, a young dancer of great potentialities. She has been given more to do this year and has not disappointed her proponents, turning in a very creditable Frankie, among other roles.

We come now to the disappointing sojourn of Col. de Basil's Original Ballet Russe at the Metropolitan Opera House, which began on March 20th. Apart from Rosella Hightower's *Giselle*, the best thing to be said is that the engagement was only for two weeks. Original Ballet Russe has a repertoire of fine ballets, but company discipline seems almost non-existent. Further, too many of the female dancers are guilty of every cheap trick of expression and exaggerated manner that would be characteristic of the ballet attached, let us say, to a provincial opera company on the Continent. I have a sneaking feeling that it may be quite some time before Original Ballet Russe plays at the Met. again.

Opening night, however, was not without its excitement. The programme had scheduled Markova-Dolin in *Giselle*, Rosella Hightower and André Eglevsky in the *Black Swan pas de deux*, and *Graduation Ball*. A few hours before curtain rise, word spread that Markova was indisposed and that Hightower was being feverishly rehearsed in the role by Dolin. Feverishly is the *mot juste*, since Miss Hightower was herself battling 'flu. In ordinary circumstances she would have asked to be excused from her *pas de deux*. But she is not only a first-rate artist, she is a trouper, and so she rehearsed all afternoon, and she went on that night in a new role and she won the bravos of the audience. It was not a flawless performance, but her work was marked by the purity of line, the high standards of artistry and the

THE BALLET THEATRE PRODUCTION OF "LES PATINEURS" WITH DÉCOR BY CECIL BEATON

Photograph by George Karger-Pix





NORA KAYE AND ANTONY TUDOR IN "DIM LUSTRE"

incerity that Miss Hightower always brings to her work.

Mr. Dolin was a great help as a partner and steadying influence, and I know that Rosella was grateful for his stagecraft. Marjorie Tallchief was Queen of the Wilis and George Skibine was a very good Hilarion. Of the *corps de ballet*, the less said the better.

Nina Stroganova replaced Miss Hightower in the *Black Swan pas de deux*. A rather bitter critic, who must be nameless, described her in a foyer conversation as "the poor man's Toumanova". That may sum it up exactly. Eglevsky was in fine technical form but his performance that night lacked poetry. His elevation was gasp-producing, his *entrechats* were quick and clean and his turns were never better, but some vital element was lacking.

Lichine's *Graduation Ball*, with its gay Strauss music and tongue-in-cheek approach, fared somewhat better. Roman Jasinsky as the Drummer, Marjorie Tallchief and Margaret Banks in the *fouetté* competition, and Alpheus Koon as the headmistress, were most notable.

The balance of the season followed the pattern of the opening—excellent ballets and careless, undisciplined performance. It would be nice to see *Constantia*, *Sebastian*, *Paganini* and all the others again. The company would have to be revitalised, however, for the ballets to mean much. Fine artists like Rosella Hightower, André Eglevsky and George Skibine deserve a better showcase for their talents.

With almost no advance publicity, Sunday, April 20th, saw the return to New York of Trudi Schoop and her Comic Ballet. There were just two performances, matinée and evening, of her new dance-comedy *Barbara*, music by Nico Kaufman. Barbara, an appealing little tyke, goes through many experiences—as a salesgirl in a hat shop, in a furnished room, with a dance team, at a society benefit for poor children, etc.—until she finds her career as a dancing clown. Miss Schoop's range of expression through movement is limited, and the humour is continental and broad, but I laughed unashamedly and had a pleasant evening. There were some "bits" that were exceptionally good. Blanche Aubry as Joe the Ballroom Dancer, and Lukas Amann as Jim, her partner, were very satisfying. Voli Geiler as the Jazz Singer at the society party, Manuela Espada and Robert Rosselat in a burlesque of a Spanish Dance, and Blanche Aubry again as Titine, *la célèbre vedette*, were highlights for me. Blanche Aubry is a real comic discovery.

Three weeks of Ballet Theatre at the City Center, beginning April 28th, marked the end of the spring season. Ballet Theatre, with its large productions and heavy fixed sets, was cramped in this small theatre. Nevertheless, the company is as a whole dancing better than ever.

Les Sylphides opened the programme. Barbara Fallis did the waltz, Alicia Alonso and Igor Youskevitch did the mazurka and Lucia Chase the prelude. My principal complaint is that Miss Chase, one of our best *demi-caractère* dancers, should have agreed to do a role as unsuited to her as the prelude.

Antony Tudor's *Romeo and Juliet*, despite the handicap of close quarters, was successfully presented with Nora Kaye and Hugh Laing. This was followed by the *Grand pas de deux* from *The Nutcracker* by Alonso and Youskevitch. Miss Alonso is moving rapidly towards a secure position among the ballerinas. She has lost most of her sometimes distressing mannerisms which seemed to have been derived in imitation of Markova. Youskevitch is a capable replacement for Eglevsky. I think the new ballet audiences of London would appreciate his many outstanding good points. The programme closed with *Interplay*, which has lost none of its vitality and exuberance.

This season was my first chance to see Jerome Robbins' *Facsimile*, a three-character ballet of three insecure people. The reviews when it was first presented last autumn did not do it justice. It has many merits. The role of the woman, danced by Nora Kaye, is exceptionally difficult from a technical viewpoint, and Miss Kaye is sensational, to say the least. This is a genuine triumph for her. Hugh Laing and John Kriza are the two men in the triangle.

There were no other new ballets. Tudor's *Dim Lustre* was revived and his *Dark Elegies* was announced as another revival for later in the run.

(Continued at bottom of next page, col. 1)

"MARDI GRAS" —AND SOME ANSWERLESS QUESTIONS

By FRANK JACKSON

REPEATED viewings of Andrée Howard's *Mardi Gras*, which seems to me one of the most important new ballets of recent years, have been largely instrumental in rousing in me doubts and questions on the old subject of the importance of ballet as an art form.

The first thing one has to realise, of course (and, though it is perhaps a truism, we are inclined to forget it), is that it is only very recently that ballet has come to be allowed as a possible vehicle for serious artistic expression. I am quite sure that if you could have persuaded a balletomane of the Imperial Russian Ballet to sit through *Mardi Gras* he would have condemned its subject matter as totally unsuitable for ballet, which, he would affirm, should concern itself only with fairy stories; and that what mattered was the virtuosity and beauty in motion of the dancers and not the subject of the ballet in which they were dancing. That was no more than an excuse.

His view is corroborated by the fact that even *Giselle*, which is the most important thematically of all surviving nineteenth-century ballets, still has about as much intellectual content as would safely go into a thimble; while the bulk of the ballets of the Golden Age of Diaghilev, when the best dancers, musicians and artists were working with ballet (and might therefore have been expected to give us a work of major and lasting value), have already disappeared into oblivion partly, at least, because they had nothing to say which made them worth preserving. (No, I haven't forgotten about *Petrouchka*; if this is a major work, as compared

with major works in other art forms, it is the exception which proves the rule.)

Yet it is always claimed that ballet is a supreme co-operation between music, dancing and painting. In theory, therefore, the best ballet should give us a satisfaction which transcends any of these other arts separately. In fact it seems to me a co-operation which, in the past, has only succeeded at the expense of clipping the wings of music and painting. Ernest Walker, in 1914, was already talking about the submission of a spiritual art (music) to a bodily tyranny (dancing), and someone has pointed out that the best ballet music is always second-rate music. I don't see how these views can be denied. As soon as choreographer's make use of music of first-rate quality (e.g., Brahms' Fourth Symphony), the result is a limitation and not an enlargement of understanding. I still cannot hear the slow movement of the Symphony without Verchinina's red-clad figure obtruding itself between me and the music. Here the dancing definitely subtracted from the value of the music, not, I suggest, because of any limitations in the choreographer's intelligence, but because, enlarge the rules of ballet as much as you like, admit bare feet, flowing hair, words even, still somehow the heights and depths of intellectual and emotional discovery have been beyond it. I have spoken only of the music; for no one has ever claimed, I think, that ballet has produced a first-class work of art in its settings.

I suppose that *Les Forains* is as perfect a ballet as any we may hope to see for some time; certainly it is the most complete fusion of dancing, music and setting that I remember. But if this is the highest ballet can ever reach, then the outlook is indeed grey.

But why should this be so? After all, dancing is as fundamental a human activity as music and painting, though so far it has produced nothing to rank with the masterpieces of the other arts. And surely notation presents no more difficulty than originally the notation of music must have seemed to present, while the impermanence of the human material which interprets the choreographer's wishes is paralleled in the theatre.

Mardi Gras suggested one probable reason to me. In addition to the limitations imposed by dancing as a medium of expression which Walker pointed out, there is another limitation which may prove to be a major cause in the present comparative unimportance of ballet as an art. So exacting is the technique of ballet that dancers have, very generally speaking, passed their prime at an age when a writer or a composer or

(Continued from previous page)

A word about two of the younger dancers. Ruth Ann Koesun deserves a special commendation for her interpretation of the Girl in Pink in *On Stage*. English ballet lovers will miss Barbara Cole, who had such a promising freshman year in the company. The strenuous tour tired her and she is leaving the company for a rest in New York.

It is too bad that Frederick Ashton, to my mind one of the two or three greatest living choreographers, is represented only by *Les Patineurs*. This ballet has done yeoman service on tour, being given night after night all across the continent and back. It was acquired by Ballet Theatre because they needed another good "closing ballet", but, strangely enough, on only one of this spring's programmes does it close the bill. American audiences deserve an opportunity to see more Ashton.

painter is considered still to be an apprentice. The result is that however mature the choreographer, he must express himself through immature interpreters. Most of his dancers are capable of giving us only the outward show of emotion. Even the more mature dancers live in such a closed circle that they can know but little of the feelings of the majority, and, without such knowledge, they are never likely to be able to translate these feelings into dancing at any more than second-hand. *Mardi Gras* was clearly the result of much painful and deeply felt experience on the part of the choreographer, but, although I am sure everything was made as clear as possible to the children who were interpreting these experiences in terms of dancing, still the ballet lost force through the dancers' immaturity.

As Americans seem to grow up so quickly, it was only natural that they should come closest to a convincing portrayal of the contemporary scene (I am thinking particularly of *Fancy Free*); yet Hagar's real and important frustration had to be set in an awkward symbolic frame partly, I am sure, because of the lack of spiritual depth of the dancers. I hasten to add that this is not meant to be a personal reflection.

So I am left, as I said, with doubts and questions. How is ballet going to overcome its disabilities? Can it overcome them? Should it overcome them? Does

it want to? Is the very real and unique pleasure we get from ballet as we know it now always to remain on the level of its best to date? I don't know the answers, but I humbly suggest that the following might help. First, a more completely all-round education for the dancers; second, a greater willingness on the part of choreographers to experiment not so much with technique as with subject matter (*Green Table* and *Big City* may be dead-ends as ballet themes, but I am inclined to think they are not, and have only acquired this label because so few choreographers cared to follow up the possibilities of these ballets). Third, an increased discrimination on the part of the audience; this may involve making special appeals and building up an entirely new audience.

These things are only the beginning, but I don't think we should be content to see ballet stop at being either a recreation for the tired business man, a stamping ground for amateur neurotics, or an emotional Turkish bath. After all, as I have said, dancing has its roots in basic human activity, of which it is no more than a highly stylised form. This, indeed, is what gives all folk dancing its strange power, in spite of technical limitations.

I don't think it would hurt if we all remembered this a little more often.

NINA VYROUBOVA AND ROLAND PETIT IN "LA SYLPHIDE", THE FAMOUS TAGLIONI BALLET REVIVED BY LES BALLET DES CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES NOW APPEARING AT THE WINTER GARDEN THEATRE, LONDON

Photograph by B. M. Bernard, Paris



The London Ballet Circle

SIX months ago a very small group of young people foregathered outside Covent Garden one evening and decided that there was a need for an active ballet club in London. A lot of thought and consideration was given to the idea, a meeting was advertised for any one interested, and on October 3rd, 1946, in an office in Soho Square, the London Ballet Circle was launched upon the, as yet, unsuspecting public.

During the next few days the founders of this organisation worked at fever heat trying to get premises wherein to hold meetings and lectures, writing frantically at articles for the Circle's own magazine "Petit Tour", and running a well-disciplined advertising campaign about the proposed activities of the newly-formed Ballet Circle. Due to these efforts subscriptions began to come in with increasing speed, with two well-known ballet magazine editors among the first applicants. Several leading dancers were approached to become Honorary Members, and Miss Fonteyn, M. Leonide Massine and Mr. Helpmann were among the many notables of the present-day ballet world to show interest enough to accept this position. Miss De Valois has given us great encouragement from the start, and Mr. Geoffrey Corbett and Mr. Leo Kersley have both been ardent supporters of our efforts.

We have presented during this span of our "life" six successful meetings, and have had the pleasure of introducing to our members "Dance Theatre", a newly-formed ballet company under the direction of Miss Nesta Brooking; Mr. Geoffrey Corbett, who gave an interesting lecture, including the music of *Le Tricorne*, three days before the first night of this famous Massine ballet; Mr. Leo Kersley, reviewing our English Choreographers; Mr. Franks, a well-known lecturer from the City Literary Institute; Mr. Fernau Hall, ballet critic; and Miss Joan Lawson, who has proved a great friend and has shown considerable interest in our work.

Abroad we have awakened the interest of The Kamin Dance Bookshop, New York, U.S.A., who have requested several copies of our magazine to be sent to them monthly, and also the editor of a famous Swiss and Austrian magazine has become a member. Another recently acquired member is an ex-dancer from the Berlin State Opera Ballet.

Then there is the Circle's own magazine "Petit Tour". Designed for the members by the members; a paper where any one can air their pet theories on ballet and so provide entertaining reading for the rest, apart from the topical news and articles it contains. Mostly written at the moment by members of the Committee, but possibly this is due to an inferiority

complex among our members at seeing their names in print! We run a ballet class for beginners every Monday (7—9 p.m.) at 26 West Street, W.1, under the direction of Miss Betty Warren, and we have had the honour of a member of the Sadler's Wells Company taking one of our classes for us. This, surely, shows the interest the dancers themselves are taking.

Besides these vast activities, we have found time on three separate Sundays to migrate to the regions of Hammersmith, and at the request of the West London Music Circle have presented to their members recordings of ballet music. Success has been ours on these occasions, and it is usually with great difficulty that the Music Circle are able to provide adequate seating accommodation for those present.

So, in six months we few, we happy few, have gone ahead and built up The London Ballet Circle from 10—12 members to its present-day membership of over 350, with no capital to start us off, and no influential backing; just an extreme love of ballet. Would any one say that we had failed?

If, after reading all about us, you feel that you, too, would like to become a member of this progressive organisation, then send a stamped and addressed envelope to the Secretary, The London Ballet Circle, 47 Ashchurch Grove, W.12, and you will receive a membership form by return of post.

DORIS BELCH,

Assistant Secretary.

(*Oklahoma!*), continued from page 22)

can be no doubt that her task has been made easier by a surfeit of talent which we, in this country, could ill afford in similar circumstances. The *pièce de résistance* is definitely the ballet at the end of Act One. In this—based on Laurey's dream—Miss de Mille skilfully wire-walks the void between classical dance and acrobaticism, particularly in the breath-taking *pas de deux*, though I deprecate the mannered arm movements of Laurey's friends which are such a pernicious element of modern ballet, and which make their appearance when the ballet-maker has nothing further to express.

The company is magnificent, there is no other word for it. Indeed, with the stage full of so many personalities, it is difficult to single out any one member for special praise. If pressed, my choice would be for Miss Dorothea MacFarland—her "Ado Annie" is a constant joy; Miss Gemze de Lappe and Mr. Eric Kristen, for their neat and pleasant dancing; and Miss Betty Jane Watson, as "Laurey", who seems destined to play "Alice" some day—if Hollywood doesn't claim her first.

Balletomane's Bookshelf

BALLET DESIGN—PAST AND PRESENT. By C. W. Beaumont. (The Studio Ltd., 30s. net.)

Ballet Design—Past and Present is a re-issue in single volume form—with textual revisions and the addition of several important plates—of Mr. Beaumont's *Design for the Ballet and Five Centuries of Ballet Design*. Together with the same author's *Complete Book of Ballets*, it is not only the most scholarly contribution yet made to the history of the ballet theatre but, within the limitations imposed by its subject matter, a brilliant appendix to Dr. Allardyce Nicoll's studies in the history of the Drama.

The primary importance of *Ballet Design*, however, is centred in its practical value to contemporary ballet-makers rather than in the scope and exactitude of its erudition. In essentials the problems facing the creators of today are identical with those propounded so completely by Noverre almost two centuries ago. It was no mere coincidence that Noverre's reforms were concerned as much with the costuming and scenic decoration of his time as with its choreography, since most of the major developments in the latter art have often been the direct outcome of innovations in costume design. Thus we find the use of *temps d'élevation* in female dancing developing from Camargo's adoption of the *caleçon de precaution*, the forerunner of the *maillot*, or tights, which, as Mr. Beaumont suggests, 'permitted as great a change in the art of dancing as did the invention of gunpowder on warfare'. A near rival in importance was Sallé's appearance in *Pygmalion* 'without paniers, petticoat, and bodice . . . dressed only in a single muslin robe which was draped about her in the manner of a Greek statue' (Strange how large a part Greek dress plays in physical emancipation!); a premature essay in simplification which inspired Noverre's reforms and, incidentally, prepared the way for Directoire fashion. Again, the "Taglionising" of the Romantic Ballet was not only the direct outcome of Duponchel's designs for *Robert le Diable* (Mr. Beaumont does not mention this extremely important point), in its turn a manifestation of a predominant infantile diabolism, but the principal instigator of an intellectual mode which revolutionised the European moral code and stereotyped ballet costume and theme for the rest of the century.* From the 1860's onwards costumes, choreography and settings degenerated; once more imagination and taste gave way before an overwhelming interest in technique for its own sake. "The skirt", as Mr. Beaumont comments, "was made shorter and fuller, and stuffed with additional muslin petticoats until it became shaped like a lampshade.

* See *Taste and Fashion* by James Laver for an acute analysis of this point.

With the development of technique and the constant striving towards the achievement of more and more difficult, almost acrobatic, *tours de force*, the skirt, in order to afford the legs the necessary freedom, became shorter and shorter, until it resembled a powder-puff".

Such was the situation in Fokine's youth. The result, as we all know, was the greatest artistic and choreographic revolution in ballet history, from the effects of which we have not recovered. The Diaghilev period is extremely well represented in this book and, with few exceptions, the overall perfection of its designs out-dazzles the rest. Fokine's principles, as interpreted by his distinguished collaborators, are summed up by Mr. Beaumont in these words: "Costume for ballet is governed by five considerations: line, decorative design, colour, material, and relation to the dancer's movements. Again, the designers must always bear in mind that the costume worn by a dancer will be seen mainly under conditions of movement, often very rapid". Would that some of our young designers at Sadler's Wells took that last sentence to heart!

Tradition is a grossly misused word in the ballet world; it has, unfortunately, become synonymous with "arrested development" or "useless convention". There is every indication that certain elements of modern ballet are in grave danger of becoming thus fossilised. Mr. Beaumont calls attention to at least one of them—the curious costumes, so suggestive of Grammar School Speech Days, brought into prominence by the Symphonic Ballet. "Of late years", he writes, "the vogue for athleticism has led to the theory that the best costume for the male dancer is none. One school prefers the dancer's dress to be reduced to the minimum compatible with decency, so that the costume consists of little more than abbreviated shorts combined with a vest or miniature cape flung over the shoulders; another school favours the fleshings borrowed from the acrobat. These types, used in moderation, have much to commend them, but, exploited to excess, they become tedious". How heartily I agree, but surely the persistent use of night-dresses by female dancers is equally tedious?

Of necessity I have but fringed Mr. Beaumont's fascinating subject, which offers so much opportunity for speculation and digression. His authority on historical matters is so absolute that one hesitates to call his attention to one point—in common with other writers, he states that Taglioni's famous costume for *La Sylphide* was a cloudy white relieved by pale blue wings. M. Lifar, in his study, *Giselle*, declares this to be incorrect; furthermore, his thesis on the origins of the Romantic Ballet is founded on a contrary statement. "Tout d'abord le ballet 'blanc';" he writes, "ne date pas de *La Sylphide*, comme on s'accorde à le penser généralement, mais de *Giselle*. Dans *La Sylphide*,

Marie Taglioni, *fille de l'air*, était vêtue de gaze bleu-ciel . . . Le ballet 'blanc' est bien une découverte du romantisme, mais l'une des dernières, sinon la dernière en date, il ne peut, par conséquent, définir en aucun cas une époque dont il n'est que la conclusion". I would like to learn Mr. Beaumont's opinion on this.

This book, I imagine, will be bought for its wealth of exquisite illustration alone. To the older ballet-goer it will provide many evenings of nostalgic recollection, to the younger, a glance into a fabulous fairyland brought a little nearer to reality by the recent productions of *Le Tricorne* and *La Boutique Fantasque*. My congratulations to the publishers for their achievement in producing such a handsome and reasonably priced volume under present conditions; I, for one, will not rest until future editions bring it up to date. ALAN STOREY.

BALLET ANNUAL. Edited by Arnold L. Haskell. (Adam & Charles Black. 21s. net.)

If this first number turns out to be somewhat formless and lacking in character (and therefore disappointing), it is doubtless because so much foundation work had to go into establishing it. That job now being done, we may look forward to *Ballet Annual* becoming a very valuable survey of each year's events. Mr. P. J. S. Richardson paves the way with his chronological summary of Ballet in England from 1910 to 1945. Although owing to the inevitable delays which held up the publication of this *Annual* for nearly six months, the position regarding the various companies in the U.S.A. has materially altered since Josselyn Hennessy wrote his article, the situation as to general working conditions undoubtedly still applies. Miss Caryl Brahms' article, "Trend in Ballet", reveals no trend that I can discover except her own determination to insult as many people as possible in the space available. There are articles by C. W. Beaumont, Marie Rambert, Joan Lawson, Michael Ayrton and Geoffrey Corbett amongst many others, many photographs (not always well chosen) and four colour reproductions of designs for ballet. The book throughout shows signs of its editor's well-known carelessness in proof reading, and readers will probably be glad to know that the dancer in the upper picture on page 57, who very obviously is *not* Semyonova, is actually Marina Bogalubskaya, and on page 63 it is K. Sergeyev not V. Chabukiani in *Taras Bulba*. P.W.M.

IMPRESARIO. By S. Hurok. (Macdonald. 15s. net.)

Sol Hurok's autobiography, written in collaboration with Ruth Goode, presents the most famous of present day impresarios in an enchanting role as a kind of great, big, benevolent Russian Father Christmas, who loves art and does not mind how much money he pours

out in its service. Getting it back again is his last consideration. Some of the artists who have worked for him might not quite agree with the verisimilitude of this self-portrait, and it is a sad fact that many of those about whom he writes have since parted company with him more in anger than in sorrow. There are any number of good back stage stories, my own favourite being the one about Chaliapine holding up a performance of *Boris Goudonov* while he industriously sawed the legs off Boris's throne. For the balletomane there are chapters on Pavlova, Isadora Duncan, and the later intricacies of Ballet in America (the latter even more complicated now than when this book first appeared in the U.S.A.). The whole is an enthralling success story on the traditional "country boy makes good" lines, the country boy in this instance starting life in an obscure Russian village, and it is all tremendously fun if taken with a sufficient helping of salt. P.W.M.

COVENT GARDEN BOOKS, NUMBER ONE: SADLER'S WELLS BALLET—1946-1947. Edited by Anthony Gishford. (The Covent Garden Opera Trust. 10s. net.)

A charming but far too expensive souvenir of the Wells' occupation of Covent Garden; with a tribute to the late Lord Keynes by Mr. David Webster, a reminiscent sketch of the young de Valois, a brief history of the theatre, some amusing observations by Mr. Michael Benthall on the making of a ballet, and two curiously pedestrian and unilluminating essays on *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Giselle* by Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell.

Due, no doubt, to the present difficulties of book-production, the book is not complete as a record of the last twelve months—no mention being made, for instance, of the Massine revivals or of Massine himself.

In short, the editor has made an undistinguished compromise between the tastes of connoisseur and "fan" which is unlikely to satisfy either, since it makes no attempt to evaluate the general standard of performances for the former, or to provide the spicy morsels of personal information so necessary to the latter. Some of the photographic reproductions are of excellent quality but the illustrations in colour are, on the whole, harsh and blatant. I feel that the models for such a brochure should have been the souvenir programmes of the American Ballet Theatre, which are of some value to the dance-historian and a continual delight to everyone else. ALAN STOREY.

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET AT COVENT GARDEN.

A Book of Photographs by Merlyn Severn. (John Lane, The Bodley Head. 21s. net.)

I am afraid I do not find this a patch on Merlyn Severn's previous magnificent "Ballet in Action". Either the lighting at Covent Garden nowadays is less

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